

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1-A

WASHINGTON TIMES
18 July 1985

Navy spy ring snarls world's largest base

By George Archibald
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

NORFOLK, Va. — The world's largest naval base is having a difficult time complying with orders from the Pentagon to beef up protection of military secrets, Navy officials say.

A month after being told to make an immediate 10 percent cut in the number of military and civilian employees holding top secret, secret and confidential clearances — and a 50 percent reduction as soon as possible — commanders still "don't have the remotest idea" how many people have the clearances, said a spokesman for Adm. Wesley L. McDonald, commander of the Atlantic Fleet.

Officials are still reviewing the personnel folders and work requirements of 102,000 servicemen and 40,000 civilian defense workers — about one-fifth the entire Navy — assigned to Tidewater's three major port installations, said Cmdr. Arthur Norton.

"We're still picking up the pieces of broken crockery," Cmdr. Norton explained. "The glue is in, but it isn't dry yet."

In early June, Adm. James D. Watkins, chief of naval operations, gave commanders 30 days to eliminate about 90,000 security clearances held by military and civilian workers throughout the world.

Commanders were instructed to inform the Pentagon of the number of clearances withdrawn and the number remaining at each level. "If a specific job does not demand a

clearance, take it away," the order said.

Priority was given to eliminating unnecessary top secret clearances and restricting access to communications information, according to the order.

Yesterday, Lt. Stephen Pietropaoli, a Navy spokesman at the Pentagon, said all Navy commands have responded to Adm. Watkins' directive. He was unable to say whether any commands filed negative reports or requested extensions to cut the number of security clearances.

The Office of Navy Intelligence has "not had an opportunity to assemble the data and make any sense of it," he said. "Reductions are going to exceed 10 percent," he added. "They were done through the administrative side."

The initiatives are a reaction to allegations that the so-called Walker spy ring passed some of the Navy's most highly guarded military

secrets to the Soviets for the past 20 years.

Charged with espionage are John A. Walker Jr. of Norfolk, a former Navy communications specialist who served aboard submarines during the 1960s; his brother, Arthur, a former Navy officer; his son, Michael, a seaman assigned to the aircraft carrier Nimitz; and a close friend, Jerry A. Whitworth of San Francisco, another former Navy communications specialist.

Michael Walker was in charge of the Nimitz's "burn bags" for classified documents. FBI officials reported they found about 75 classified documents from the aircraft carrier among the 129 items that John Walker left at a drop site in the Maryland suburbs.

Navy investigators said they also

found 15 pounds of classified material near Michael Walker's bunk on the Nimitz at the time of his arrest.

In response, Adm. Watkins ordered that all classified material awaiting destruction be "protected at all times." He also ordered a return to the "two-man rule" for destroying classified information.

Under the rule, only "well-trained personnel, cleared to the level of classified information being destroyed" would be assigned to the duty. Two individuals, one of whom must be a second-class petty officer (GS-5) or higher rate, "will be assigned on a rotating basis to protecting the material in transit and witnessing its destruction," the chief of naval operations directed.

Adm. Watkins also ordered field commanders to begin lie detector

tests — limited to questions about possible espionage — as a random means of checking the trustworthiness of those with high security clearances.

But so far the polygraph issue "hasn't even been addressed" by the Atlantic Fleet, said Cmdr. Norton.

Also on hold is a directive that officers, enlisted personnel and civilian defense contractors be subjected to random searches of briefcases or papers as they leave Navy ships or offices, officials said.

Commanders are waiting for the Navy's Judge Advocate Corps to establish firm guidelines under search-and-seizure laws, it was reported.

Adm. Watkins also ordered increased controls on the copying and removal of classified material from military installations. As a result, defense contractors with security clearances, who once freely copied classified documents for later reference, have been prohibited from using the Navy's copying machines, an officer disclosed.

Military offices have also been told to cut back on the number of documents that are classified, the officer said.